Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

LIBRARY WORK FOR IMMIGRANTS

By John Foster Carr, *Director, Immigrant Publication Society, New York*

One of our local humorists has an excellent fable of a typewriter possessed by a familiar spirit. I know not what familiar has entered into possession of a certain typewriter, for I find to my surprise that the subject for which I am set down on the program does not agree with my official invitation. The humor of the situation is further emphasized by the fact that, as stated, it is a suggestion with which I am not entirely in sympathy. So I propose to say, in the first place, a few words about that; in the second, with the consent of your program committee, to discuss the subject assigned me by your President: that is to say, foreign lists, and how the books in foreign languages that are so much needed by our public libraries can be provided.

First, then, I think there is no exaggeration in the statement that perhaps the library's greatest need in the matter of work with foreigners is that of publicity, publicity among those whom you hope to make readers, as well as the publicity that chiefly concerns us this morning, that will be of mutual help to librarians. This need is all the greater for the fact, that, as I believe I showed you yesterday, the libraries of the United States have already built up a highly successful and efficient program of work in this field. It remains to make that program known to libraries that have not yet taken up this work, and wish to do so, as well as to libraries that tomorrow may find the need to do it.

In increasing the local service of the library, everything that can help in advertising is important. The question is how to get the maximum amount of result from your efforts. In this connection I would like to call your attention to a very excellent article that appeared in your Bulletin for last January, by Mr. Kerr, of Kansas. It seems to me that that covers the ground —with easy adaptation to immigrant work —in the most splendid way; and itself deserves the widest publicity, for I know of nothing so practical and useful in advice on this subject.

As to the help that library can give library, as well as other societies: It is the officially declared purpose of this Association that the Secretary and his office, within due physical limits, constitute a clearing house of information. Here is the useful germ that can be usefully developed by actual demand—a far better plan, it seems to me, than the sudden creation of imposing machinery.

Dr. Shiels has spoken with effective humor of the common use of the word "coöperation." In the jargon of modern efficiency there is one other alluring term, and that is "clearing house." I know of a society interested, among other things, in immigration, that during many years has made—I am so informed by its secretary— a very comprehensive collection of books, documents, pamphlets, leaflets, and what not, relating to immigration. It has aspired to be a clearing house of information on the subject. Yet its facilities are almost unknown to specialists in the field. Another society, of large means and active interest in immigration, wrote to me some six years ago on this same subject of "the clearing house": "Do you approve of it?" "Would you help?" "Would you give money to support it?" The last letter received from it, just a few weeks ago, proposed the same three questions. As a matter of fact, to speak very frankly, I think it hard, if not impossible, to find one of these ambitious clearing house projects that has ever succeeded. They usually fail either on account of the unforeseen and forbidding cost of the enterprise, or because of lack of interest on the part of those that they are organized to serve. That is my own experience.

It is, of course, very important for other societies to have the means of knowing what the public libraries are doing in this great work with our foreign-born, but it is vastly more important for the librarian, suddenly faced with the need of work with foreigners, to know how that work is being done successfully in other libraries, and how other libraries have failed. A formal resolution will doubtless provide for the development of this new publicity. I wish only to emphasize the need of individual interest to help, and like Dr. Shiels, to beg that "coöperation" be interpreted in terms of work.

And now for the matter of foreign lists: I have a friend whose little girl was suddenly confronted with the statement that God had made everything. She asked, "Did God make you, mama?" "Yes, dear." "Did God make me?" "Yes, dear." "Did God make the flies, too?" "Yes, dear." The child thought a few moments and then said: "Awful fussy business, making flies!"

That is the thing with these lists; yet lists we must have. Good annotated lists are the basis of this work of ours. They are imperatively necessary for purchase and reference. Many librarians keep them in constant circulation — particularly through the children, they are sent home to suggest reading to adults of the family who do not come to the library. They are cut and pasted within the books to which they refer, and so are useful to readers who go to the open shelves. They are useful to librarians who are not familiar with these languages. They are also useful to Americans interested in foreign languages.

But there are, as I have suggested, many difficulties in preparing such lists, and difficulties beyond the thousand details of a minute bibliographical task. Our immigrants are largely illiterate or poorly educated. There are very few competent advisers to be found among them. The few with education are rarely fitted to select books for the average man who needs them. One of your ex-presidents has told me of his attempt to start an Armenian department. He found a well-educated young Armenian who had repeatedly asked for Armenian books. He said, "Make up a list, and we will see if we can't get you the books." The list was made. He insisted upon having the titles translated, and to his horror the books consisted largely of anarchistic and atheistic literature. Another librarian—I want to give you very briefly the experiences of librarians—had the help of a deeply interested priest, who provided, at need, a list of books in his native language. But it was found to contain almost nothing but imposing classics. Another eminent librarian has told me of his library's need of a French list suited to French Canadians. He tried to get it from a French professor of learning and repute, and explained to him the necessity, that these people were not highly educated, that what they wanted were books simple, useful, interesting. "You hardly need have said that to me," said the professor, "I have been on a walking trip through French Canada. I know these people." And yet when the list was finished it was found to be made up of books far too scholarly for popular use.

To illustrate further the difficulty of getting competent advice: There is an important foreign society, devoted to the service of one of the great languages of culture. With a large endowment it has specialized on libraries and books for workingmen. Yet when I wrote and asked what practical methods they were using to interest working people in reading books, methods that might be of service in America, their reply was: "What are your American libraries doing, and what do you advise?" If this is true of a foreign society of that sort, of distinguished standing, what shall we think of other foreign language literary societies, with imposing names?

Then there is the danger of having the matter handled, as it often is handled, by those who have no personal knowledge whatever of the language that may happen to be involved, and who furthermore, as you librarians so well know, often attempt to force their advice upon you.

Now, what are some of the other conditions that we are facing? Faithful, they say, are the wounds of a friend. So let me tell you a few facts. On the shelves of one of our most important libraries the largest representation of Italian fiction is devoted to the Laura Jean Libbey of Italy. It boasts her complete works in I know not how many duplicates. In another library I was shown the other day a book which had been innocently placed on the list—a bartender's guide. Many of our libraries have been victimized by popular demand for books that are flagrantly indecent. Books of religious polemics are too often admitted. Then one library has lately sent me a nicely printed sheet of library conversation in Italian, interlined with English. There was not an Italian sentence or line of that sheet that did not contain some gross error. Two or three sentences were absolutely unintelligible because of their errors. Another important library, in a very attractive leaflet, got out to advertise to foreigners the facilities and opportunities of the library, is using in one language for the word "library" a word that does not mean library at all. It means a bookseller's shop, or two or three other things, but never a public library. That is the danger of depending upon the chance adviser, even though you believe him cultured in his native language!

Now, one need of these lists as reflected in the correspondence and work of our Society with libraries shows the sharply marked difference between the needs of small and large libraries. Preliminary lists are often needed of a small number of selected books, say of from 25 to 50 volumes. Then lists of general use are in large demand giving about 500 titles, such as the Italian list that our Society has published. Beyond that, supplemental lists are immensely needed; and more ambitious than that, an annotated list, regularly issued, of the important and useful books published each year in a dozen foreign languages.

A question that is constantly being asked me by librarians, several times since I have been here, is how persons can be found who are competent to prepare these lists? For the reasons that I have given you I think it must appear that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find single helpers who are capable of preparing any one of these lists. You know the extreme pains you have to take, and that you are continually taking, in the selection of books in the English language; the endless process of criticism and suggestion and consultation! Yet I know how modest you are with regard to the result. You do not consider it as definitive, or perfect in choice, or free from error. How much more necessary is it to observe the greatest care, indeed to multiply care, when you are dealing with books that are in a foreign language.

To sum up, then, the teaching of our experience in these matters:

First, a list of foreign books is worthless unless it is in harmony with the culture of their land of origin, but it must still be made up of books that are simple, appealing, useful—books that will meet the taste of the people who are going to read them here.

It is, consequently, worthless unless it is prepared with an accurate knowledge of the people's needs.

It is worthless unless prepared with an accurate knowledge of what has already been done in popular library work in the country of origin.

A list is worthless unless it is formed with American library experience behind it, and, if possible, experience in the special field of the language treated.

It is worthless unless prepared with a comprehensive knowledge of the foreign publishers' newest lists, and with accurate knowledge of the best editions for library use, as well as with the definite knowledge that the books listed are not out of print.

Supplying these lists and books in foreign languages, that will help the immigrant to adjust his life more quickly to that of the new land, and to understand its conditions, as well as his duties and opportunities here, is a matter of very large expense indeed. Every librarian knows that no bibliography of the sort we are here contemplating can by any possibility even pay for the expense of printing, to say nothing of other expenses involved.

So with the preparation of other books, that form the second subject of our discussion. It is impossible, I think, to expect a publisher whose business existence depends upon making money, to undertake the publication of books having a circulation, restricted at best and that must necessarily be dwindling, as we have seen —with the certainty of making no profit, and with the possibility of large loss.

Now, our Immigrant Publication Society is intensely interested in this matter. We have the experience, and we have the coöperation of the most competent helpers. We have the sympathy and the enthusiastic interest of our foreign-born—a unique thing—who delight in the democratic ideas that we have been trying to stand for. The work is not endowed; it is not a commercial venture, but it must pay its expenses in the large and more ambitious field on which we are now entering. The question is how we can make these needed books pay for their cost, and that is placed before you librarians with the hope that through you in part the affair may be managed, if we can continue successfully to meet your needs. The first suggestion I take the liberty of making, in reply to your President's question, is the wider trial and the use of the books that we have already published, and that have been fully and satisfactorily proved by library use.

I have been talking this matter over with some of our friends here, and they have suggested this plan: We propose soon to send to each member of the Association, who is conceivably interested in this work with foreigners, a letter stating the titles of books that are very much needed, among others, the History of the United States in Italian and Polish that Miss Campbell has just spoken of. And there are other books in constant library demand, the Yiddish and other foreign lists, our Immigrants' Guide in other languages, our "Makers of America" in Italian and Yiddish, the Guide to Citizenship, now nearly ready, a simple book on agriculture, one on hygiene.

We are going to prepare a list of such books, a few of them already well advanced for publication, and we are going to ask you: "If we publish these books, how many will you agree to take?" Some of them you are already familiar with, because it is only a question of translations. For others you may wish to place merely a trial order. All will be very modestly priced. Then when we receive your replies, we shall proceed as rapidly as possible, first with those for which we find the expense most nearly guaranteed. Also through this means, with the successful advance of the work, I hope we shall be able to develop an efficient bureau of advice. We are always willing to give advice and help, within the limits of our power. We shall be glad to hear from you at any time on any subject relating to this work.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AS SEEN FROM THE CIRCULATION DESK

A SYMPOSIUM

I.

This is the first time that I have attempted to record, even for my own use, a statement regarding my personal feelings toward the American public. It is one which is ever present, but to discuss it, even among one's friends, seems almost equivalent to betraying a confidence, and perhaps would be considered so by most of us, if any attempt were made to cite special cases. I feel quite sure that in the discussion this evening, the American public will be considered in its entirety and we shall thus escape being accused of disloyalty to our readers. I believe that those who are to follow me on the program would have preferred the subject reversed, and it is possible that some of the speakers will ap-